



March 6, 2021

The Honourable Chrystia Freeland
Minister of Finance
Deputy Prime Minister of Canada
House of Commons
OTTAWA, ON K1A 0A6
Via Email: chrystia.freeland@canada.ca

Dear Minister:

The public were invited to provide ideas for the 2021 federal budget. Diversity Thunder Bay is a volunteer group of individuals and representatives of organizations working toward inclusion and to end racism and discrimination in Thunder Bay, Ontario.

Our organization recommends the 2021 Federal budget fund a comprehensive Basic Income Pilot Project. We view a basic income as a fundamental human right for the equitable treatment of all Canadian citizens.

Financial insecurity and the cracks in our health and social support systems have been highlighted by the pandemic, however, they were always present. Structural inequalities disproportionately affect vulnerable and marginalized communities, making it more likely for people with disabilities, 2SLGBTQ+, Black, Indigenous, people of color, refugees and immigrants, women, single mothers and many more, to fall into systematic cycles of poverty and poor health.

To address inequality entails providing a secure basic standard of living for all. The UN Declaration of Human Rights Article #25 clearly states, *“Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself/herself and of his/her family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his/her control.”* Thus, it is imperative that the Canadian government strive to enable all of its citizens to have an income that provides an adequate standard of living for each person and each family.

Canada has long considered a Guaranteed Basic Income (GBI) as a tangible option to address inequalities. Numerous studies have explored whether the GBI is affordable versus the beneficial returns, such as growing the economy and creating jobs, as well as enormous savings in our health care and correctional system.

The GBI also offers an effective way to support important societal goals for equality. These goals include; poverty reduction and elimination, shrinking the extreme income and wealth inequalities, reducing stress

and improving mental health, increasing access to childcare, transportation, food, and housing. These improvements will truly change the lives of millions of people for the better.

Noam Chomsky, American Activist and Author, as well as Karl Widerquist, American philosopher and economist at Georgetown University, Senator Hugh Segal and a variety of others speak towards the benefits of UBI (Universal Basic Income).

Two basic income pilots were conducted in Canada, one in Manitoba, and the other in Ontario. They were stopped prematurely and no analytical efforts were undertaken.

In his 2020 report, Dr Lewchuk et al analyzed the survey responses from 200 participants in the Southern Ontario 2018 Basic Income pilot. He and his team reported: “The recipients in the Hamilton-Brantford pilot site benefitted in a range of ways.... (physical & mental health, food choice & security, housing conditions, financial, social, employment, hope & confidence).... In this sense, the pilot was nothing short of successful... “Also 40 participants were interviewed. They spoke deeply about how the security provided by basic income caused significant change in their lives; taking them from surviving to thriving, able to pursue dreams and passions, as well as giving back to their communities - contrary to the belief that guaranteed income would cause ‘laziness’.

Diversity Thunder Bay supports the need for a comprehensive well designed Basic Income Pilot Project. This will be a positive step towards the goal of providing all citizens with equal rights and equitable treatment. Establishing a guaranteed basic income would help to create a meaningful progress in producing a healthier, more equitable society - to ensure no one is deprived of the basic necessities of life and that there is a basic standard living for all.

COVID - 19 has identified the stark need to make our social security network more equitable and resilient. The Climate Emergency is engulfing us with more frequent and severe disruptions to all aspects of our lives. We need to build more sustainable and effective means of protecting those most vulnerable to these disruptions in our economy and our communities

Thus, Diversity Thunder Bay respectfully recommends that the 2021 Federal Budget fund a multi-year community basic income pilot. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely



Rebecca Johnson



Walid Chahal

Co-Chair

Diversity Thunder Bay

Co-Chair

c: Patty Hajdu (MP), Thunder Bay-Superior North, Minister of Health Patty.Hajdu@parl.gc.ca
Marcus Powlowski (MP), Thunder Bay-Rainy River Marcus.Powlowski@parl.gc.ca